

Support for the Troops

Q. Mr. President—

The President. Yes, ma'am. No more hands going up; I'm a man of my word.

Q. And I am a persistent woman. My name is Cassandra Dennis. My husband is Captain Dominic Dennis. He sends his hellos all the ways from Log Base Seitz, Iraq.

The President. Good. Thank you. He's a captain—in the Army?

Q. Army National Guard.

The President. Very good.

Q. I want your prayers for him.

The President. You got it. Thank you very much. Yes. And tell you—I'll tell you what do. You know, one of the interesting possibilities now, because of high-tech, because of the high-tech world, is that you can e-mail your husband, correct?

Q. We e-mail. We do instant-messaging. We've got web cams. We have telephones.

The President. All right, why don't you do this, then? Would you do me a favor?

Q. Yes.

The President. Would you rather e-mail him or instant-message him?

Q. I'm going to instant-message him.

The President. Instant-message him. Instant-message him this: The Commander in Chief is grateful and incredibly proud of his service.

Thank you all. God bless. Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:40 p.m. at the Eclipse Aviation hangar. In his remarks, he referred to Darren White, sheriff, Bernalillo County, NM; John Sanchez, southwest regional chairman, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.; Patrick H. Lyons, New Mexico Commissioner of Public Lands; former Representative Manuel Lujan, Jr., executive committee member, and Allen Weh, chairman, New Mexico Republican Party; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy; President Aleksander Kwasniewski of Poland; and Prime Minister John Howard of Australia. He also referred to Camp Bondsteel in Kosovo.

Remarks in Phoenix, Arizona

August 11, 2004

The President. Thank you all for coming. So yesterday, there we were in a bus in northern Florida, and old John McCain said, "Wait until you get to Phoenix." He's right.

I'm working hard to ask for your vote. I'm here to let you know there is more to do to make America a safer place, a stronger place, and a better place. I'm here to ask for your help. We won Arizona last time; we're going to win it this time. And we're going to win a great national victory.

Thank you all for coming. I only wish that Laura were here to see this crowd. She is a remarkable woman. She is a great wife, a fantastic mother. I'm going to give

you some reasons tonight to put me back in, but perhaps the most important reason of all is so that Laura has 4 more years.

I'm proud to be running with Dick Cheney. Now look, I admit it, he's not the prettiest face in the race. [*Laughter*] I didn't pick him for that reason. I picked him because of his judgment, his experience. I picked him because he can do the job.

I'm proud to be traveling with a great American and a fine citizen of this State, a person who served his Nation with distinction and honor—John McCain. I want to thank his wife, Cindy, for joining us as well. She's a class act, good lady.

I also want to thank my friend Jon Kyl, the other Senator from this State. You got two fine United States Senators from Arizona.

I want to thank my friends from the congressional delegation, Renzi, Franks, Shadegg, J.D. Hayworth, Jeff Flake, for their leadership.

I'm proud that Secretary of State Jan Brewer is here. I want to thank Jan for coming, and State Treasurer David Petersen. Listen, thank you all for coming.

I want to thank the grassroots activists who are here. I want to thank my friend Luis Gonzalez and his great wife, Christine. I know my friends the Lehmans are here. I'm glad they're here. Old Tom Lehman, I could use a putting lesson. *[Laughter]* I don't have much time to practice these days; I'm out working.

See, I'm asking for your help to register voters. You've got a lot of new people moving in this State, and they, like you, have a duty in a democracy to vote and to participate. We're asking for people to do a little extra work to register our fellow citizens and urge them to go to the polls. And when you get them headed to the polls, you might just tell them America will be better off with Bush-Cheney in the White House.

The past few years—in the past few years, Americans have been through a lot together, a whole lot, and we've accomplished a great deal. But there's only one reason to look backward at the record, and that is to determine who best to lead us forward. I'm running—I'm asking for your vote because so much is at stake. We have much more to do, much more to do to move this country forward and make it a better place.

We've got more to do to make our public schools the centers of excellence we all know they can be so that no child is left behind in America. When we came to office 3½ years ago, too many of our children were being just shuffled from grade to grade, year after year, without learning the

basics. So we challenged the soft bigotry of low expectations. We raised the sights of everybody. We believe in accountability. We believe in local control of schools. We believe in challenging schools that refuse to change and refuse to teach.

And we're making progress. We're closing that achievement gap here in America. More of our children are learning to read and write and add and subtract, and there's more to do. We want our high school diplomas to mean something. We need to make sure our children are educated for the jobs of the 21st century, so we need to concentrate on science and math. We need to bring technology into classrooms in America. What I'm telling you is, after 4 more years, a rising generation will have the hope and the skills necessary to succeed in this world.

We have got more work to do to make sure health care is available and affordable. We addressed the issue of our seniors square on. You might remember that political campaign after political campaign, our seniors were promised a stronger Medicare system. We got the job done. Our seniors now have the ability to choose a plan that meets their needs, and there will be coverage for prescription drugs for our seniors. We're doing more to make sure health care is available and affordable. We're expanding community health centers for low-income Americans. We're providing health savings accounts so American families can save tax-free to meet their own health care needs.

In order to make sure American families have got health care, we must allow small employers to join together to be able to purchase insurance at discounts that big companies are able to do. We'll harness technology to reduce costs and prevent mistakes. We'll expand research and seek new cures. And to make sure you've got affordable health care, we need to end the frivolous lawsuits that are harming our docs and harming our patients.

You cannot be pro-patient, pro-doctor, and pro-trial-lawyer at the same time. You

have to choose. My opponent made his choice, and he put him on the ticket.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I made my choice. I am for medical liability reform now. In all we do to improve health care here in this country, we will make sure the health care decisions are made by doctors and patients, not by Washington, DC, bureaucrats.

We got more to do to make sure this economy is stronger. We've been through a lot. We've been through a recession; we've been through corporate scandals; we've been through the terror attacks. Yet we've overcome these obstacles. We've overcome these obstacles because we've got great workers in America. We've overcome these obstacles because the entrepreneurial spirit is strong and the small-business sector of our economy is flourishing. We've overcome these obstacles because we've got great ranchers and farmers. And we've overcome these obstacles because we delivered well-timed tax relief to the American people. Because we acted, our economy has grown at a rate as fast as any in nearly 20 years. Because we acted, we've added nearly 1.5 million jobs over the past year. Because we acted, Arizona's unemployment rate is at 4.7 percent.

We're making progress. We're not turning back. So long as anybody is looking for work, we're going to keep working to make sure there's a job available for them. There is more work to do to keep jobs here in America and to keep this job base growing; we need to become less dependent on foreign sources of energy. We need to reduce the regulations on our employers in America. We need real, meaningful tort reform in America to keep jobs here.

In order to keep jobs here at home, we need to be opening up markets for Arizona products. We must not become economic isolationists in America. We must be confident—you see, we can compete with anybody, anytime, anywhere, so long as the playing field is level. In order to be keeping jobs here in America, we've got to make

sure our workers are trained for the jobs of the 21st century. That's why I'm such a strong backer of the community college system, not only here in Arizona but all across our country. In order to make sure we keep jobs here, we've got to be wise about how we spend your money, and we've got to keep your taxes low.

We're working together to protect our residents and forests across the West from catastrophic wildfires. Listen, I understand you're in a severe drought. Water is a precious commodity. And as a result of the drought you're in, our national treasures are—forest fires—are vulnerable. That's why I worked with John McCain and Jon Kyl to pass a bipartisan bill called Healthy Forests Restoration Act.

I understand the West. I understand the issues of the West. Some people took a different view of that Healthy Forests legislation. Back in October, my opponent told us Healthy Forests would let people chop down mountainsides of old-growth trees. When I signed the bill, he said we're taking a chainsaw to public forests. I understand the West. I understand the issues you face out here. Yet, when he came out West to campaign, he turned that position around. Now he says he likes a lot of the parts of the law. I guess it's not only the wildfires that shift with the wind. [*Laughter*]

I'm running for 4 more years to keep our Nation's economy the strongest in the industrialized world. I'm running so our small businesses are vibrant. I'm running so our farmers and ranchers are healthy, and I'm running so people can find good-paying jobs.

We have more to do to wage and win the war against terror. America's future depends on our willingness to lead in the world. If America shows uncertainty or weakness in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. The world changed on that terrible September morning, and since that day, we've changed the world. Before September the 11th, Afghanistan served as the home base of Al Qaida, which trained and deployed thousands of killers and set up cells in nations around the world, including our own. Because we acted, because we acted with our friends, Afghanistan is a rising democracy. Afghanistan is an ally in the war on terror. Young girls now go to school for the first time in Afghanistan, and America and the world are safer.

Before September the 11th, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia weren't joining us in the war on terror. Today they are. Today, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are allies in the war on terror. They're after Al Qaida. America and the world are safer.

Because of our leadership, we're changing the world. Before September the 11th, Libya was spending millions to acquire weapons of mass destruction. Today, because America and our allies have sent a clear message and a strong message, the leader of Libya has abandoned his pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, and America and the world are safer.

Before September the 11th, the ruler of Iraq was a sworn enemy of America. He was defying the world. You might remember he was firing weapons at American pilots who were enforcing the world's sanctions. He had pursued and he had used weapons of mass destruction. He harbored terrorists. He invaded his neighbors. He subsidized the families of suicide bombers. He had murdered tens of thousands of his own citizens. He was a source of great instability in the world's most volatile region.

We saw a threat. We looked at the intelligence, and we saw a threat. And as we did so, we remembered a vital lesson of September the 11th, and that lesson is we must take threats seriously, before they fully materialize.

I knew it was important on this vital matter to work with the United States Con-

gress. So I went to the Congress and said Saddam Hussein's a threat. The Congress looked at the same intelligence, and members of both political parties, including my opponent, agreed that Saddam Hussein was a threat. And then we went to the United Nations——

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. ——and the United Nations looked at the intelligence and concluded that Saddam Hussein was a threat. And they passed a resolution that said "Disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences." As he had for over a decade, Saddam Hussein defied the free world. As a matter of fact, when we sent inspectors in—or the world sent inspectors in, he systematically deceived the inspectors. And so I had a choice to make. My choice was do I forget the lessons of September the 11th——

Audience members. No-o-o!

The President. ——and hope for the best——

Audience members. No-o-o!

The President. ——and trust the word and deeds of a madman, or do I take action to defend America. I will defend America every time.

Even though we have not found the stockpiles we expected to find, we do know that Saddam had the capability to make weapons of mass destruction, and he could have passed that capability on to our enemies. That was a risk we could not afford to take. Knowing what I know today, I would have taken the same action. And America and the world are safer because Saddam Hussein sits in a prison cell.

Now, almost 2 years after he voted for the war in Iraq and almost 220 days after switching positions to declare himself the antiwar candidate, my opponent has found a new nuance. He now agrees it was the right decision to go into Iraq. After months of questioning my motives and even my credibility, Senator Kerry now agrees with me that even though we have not found

the stockpiles of weapons that we all believed were there, knowing everything we know today, he would have voted to go into Iraq and remove Saddam Hussein from power. I want to thank my opponent for clearing that up. But just remember, there are 83 days left in the campaign—time enough to change his mind again.

I'm running for 4 more years because I know we must continue to work with our friends and allies to aggressively pursue the terrorists and the foreign fighters in places like Iraq and Afghanistan and elsewhere. See, you cannot talk sense to these people. You cannot negotiate with these people. We must engage the enemy around the world so we do not have to face them here at home.

During the next 4 years, America will continue to lead the world with confidence and moral clarity. We put together a strong coalition to help us defeat terror. Listen, we've got nearly 60 nations involved with the Proliferation Security Initiative. Nearly 40 nations are involved in Afghanistan. Some 30 nations are involved in Iraq. I'll continue to build our alliances and work with our friends for the sake of peace, but I will never turn over America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

America and the world are safer. We're heading to peace because our commitments are kept by the men and women of our military. I want to thank the veterans who are here for setting such a great example to the men and women of our military. I've had the privilege of meeting with those who defend our country and sacrifice for our security. I've seen their great decency and their unselfish courage. Ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom and peace is in really good hands. And anytime—and our troops deserve the full support of the United States Government.

Last September, while our troops were in combat in Afghanistan and Iraq, I proposed supplemental funding to support them in their missions. This money was

going to—this money did provide body armor and vital equipment, hazard pay, health benefits, ammunition, fuel, and spare parts for our military. In the Senate, only a small, out-of-the-mainstream minority of 12 Senators voted against that funding. Two of those twelve Senators are my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. My opponent tried to explain his vote this way: "I actually did vote for the \$87 billion, before I voted against it." End quote. And then he went on to say that he was proud he and his runningmate voted against it, and then he went on to say, at another time, the funding issue is a complicated matter. There is nothing complicated about supporting our troops in combat.

In the long run, our security is not guaranteed by force alone. We must work to change the conditions that give rise to terror: poverty and hopelessness and resentment. I see a lady holding a sign there that says, "My son is in Iraq." I want you to know, ma'am, that your son is performing a duty that is changing the world. A free and peaceful Iraq and a free and peaceful Afghanistan will be powerful examples to their neighbors. These parts—people in these parts of the world are desperate for freedom. In Iraq and Afghanistan, there are now strong leaders who understand the power of free societies. And we understand the power of freedom in America. We know that free societies do not export terror. We know that in free societies, leaders listen to the hopes and aspirations of their people.

By serving the ideal of liberty, we are bringing hope to others, and that makes our country more secure. By serving the ideal of liberty, we're making the world more peaceful. By serving the ideal of liberty, we're serving the ideals of our country. Freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world.

I'm running for 4 more years because I know we've got a lot of work to do to protect us. Enemies who hate us are still plotting to harm us. My opponent says that going to war with the terrorists is actually improving their recruiting efforts. His logic is upside-down, and it shows a dangerous misunderstanding of the enemy we face. During the 1990s, terrorists were recruiting and training for war with us, long before America went to war with them. They don't need an excuse for their hatred. It's wrong to blame America for the anger and the evil of those killers. You don't create terrorists by defending yourself and fighting back; you defeat the terrorists by fighting back.

Listen, the September—the 9/11 Commission wrote a good report, and it said that because of the actions we've taken since September the 11th, our homeland is safer, but we're not yet safe. I agree with that conclusion. There's more work to do. Beginning immediately after September the 11th, we started the hard process of reform. We created the new Department of Homeland Security. We passed the PATRIOT Act, which is vital; it is necessary to give our law enforcement the tools necessary to disrupt terrorist activity. We're integrating intelligence and law enforcement better than ever before.

We're taking up a lot of those recommendations. We've got to do a better job of securing our ports and borders and training our first-responders and dramatically improving our intelligence gathering capabilities. I called on Congress to create the position of National Intelligence Director so that one person is in charge of coordinating our intelligence efforts overseas and here at home. There's a lot of really good people working hard to defend the American people, and I'm proud of their efforts.

Now, reforms are never easy in Washington. It takes on—it requires taking on the entrenched interests, those who are happy with the status quo. It's not enough to advocate reform; you have to be able

to get it done. When it came to reforming our public schools, we're getting the job done. When it comes to giving our health care reforms to our families, with more access and more choices, we're getting the job done. When it comes to creating jobs in America, we're getting the job done. When it comes to defending America and spreading the peace, we're getting the job done. And when it comes to choosing a President, you better have a President who can get the job done.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. We live in a time of rapid change. These are exciting times. One way to help American citizens during this time of change is to encourage an ownership society. We want people owning and controlling their own health care accounts. We want our Social Security system to work. Listen, for old people like me and McCain—[laughter]—the Social Security is sound enough for us. I'm worried about the younger workers. I'm worried about the solvency of Social Security. Therefore, I think younger workers ought to be allowed to have personal savings accounts that they can call their own.

We want more people owning their business. I love the fact when somebody says to me, you know, "I just started my own business." We want more people owning their own home. Homeownership rate is at an alltime high in America. What a fantastic thought, to know that more and more Americans are opening up their front doors saying, "Welcome to my home." You see, this administration understands that when you own something, you have a vital stake in the future of our country.

In this time of change, there's some things won't change: our belief in liberty and opportunity and in the nonnegotiable demands of human dignity; the individual values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity; the institutions that give us direction and purpose,

our families, our schools, our religious congregations. These values and institutions are fundamental to our lives, and they deserve the respect of Government.

We stand for institutions like marriage and family, which are the foundation of society. We stand for a culture of life in which every person matters and every person counts. We stand for judges who faithfully interpret the law instead of legislating from the bench. We stand for a culture of responsibility in America. This culture of ours is changing from one that has said, "If it feels good, just go ahead and do it," and "If you got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we are responsible for the decisions we make in life.

If you're fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you are responsible for loving your child with all your heart and all your soul. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you are responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in a responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving your neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourselves.

I'm seeking the vote because I want to continue to rally the armies of compassion for the next 4 years. I understand the strength of this country is the hearts and souls of the American people, and I know—and I know that by rallying the great strength of America, we can change our society one heart, one soul, one conscience at a time.

For all Americans, these years in our history will stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of its leaders. This isn't one of those times. It's a time that requires firm resolve, strong belief in the values that have made our country great.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began.

As John mentioned, on September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. It's a day I'll never forget. There were workers in hardhats yelling at me, "Whatever it takes." I remember—I remember working the ropeline, thanking people, and a fellow grabbed me. He had bloodshot eyes. He had been searching the rubble for somebody that he had worked with, and he said, "Do not let me down."

He took that day personally. All the workers took it personally. I know you took it personally, and so do I. I have a duty that goes on. I wake up every morning thinking about how to best protect our country. I will never relent in defending America, whatever it takes.

We've come through much together. We've done a lot of hard work. There's more work to be done over the next 4 years. We will spread ownership and opportunity to every corner of America. During the next 4 years, we'll pass the enduring values of our country on to another generation. During the next 4 years, we will continue to lead the world to spread freedom and peace.

Four years ago, I traveled this great country asking for the vote. I made a pledge to my fellow Americans that if you honored me with this great responsibility, I would uphold the dignity and the honor of the office to which I have been elected, so help me God. And with your help, I will do so for the next 4 years.

Thanks for coming. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:22 p.m. at Arizona Veterans Memorial Coliseum. In his remarks, he referred to Arizona Secretary of State Janice K. Brewer; Arizona State Treasurer David A. Petersen; professional baseball player Luis Gonzalez and his wife, Christine; professional golfer Tom Lehman; Col. Muammar Abu Minyar al-Qadhafi, leader of Libya; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (9/11 Commission).

Remarks to the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America in Las Vegas, Nevada

August 12, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Thank you all very much. Thank you all very much for coming. Thanks for the warm welcome. It's good to be back here in Nevada.

Audience member. We love you!

The President. Thank you. I want to thank Doug and the good folks here in this training facility for welcoming us. I appreciate your smart work and your hard work and your dedication to helping our fellow citizens gain the skills necessary to be able to find work.

And I just want to talk a little bit about the importance of education, but the reason I'm so grateful that the Carpenters have been so hospitable here is that this is an example of what works. That's what we're interested in in life; we're interested in finding things that work and heralding them. And I want to thank Doug for your leadership.

I'm not the only Bush who's recently been in Las Vegas. You might remember my wife was back here recently. She went on the Leno show the next night. [Laughter] She said something along the lines, what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas. [Laughter] I was interested in hearing her say that. [Laughter]

She's doing great, by the way. I was a lucky fellow when she said yes. And she's a wonderful First Lady and great mom. I'm going to meet up with her here in a little bit to continue our journey throughout the West.

Really what I'm doing is traveling around, letting the people know that I'm interested in earning your vote. I really believe that a person running for office—I'm also interested in letting people know I've got more to do to make this country a better place, a stronger place, and a safer place. And I appreciate the chance to come

and talk about my vision for the future of this country here.

I want to thank Doug, and I also want to thank his brother Mike. I'm not sure which one of them is prettier. [Laughter] But they're both smart, and they're both good Americans.

I want to thank Dale Shoemaker for his leadership here. I want to thank Doug Banes and Andy Silins, Bill Irwin. These are all folks who make this facility work well—appreciate your hospitality. It's great to meet the workers from all around our country.

I went to the facility next door where Doug and his folks are training people how to work on these big GE engines, and there's people from Fort Smith, Arkansas, and southern Indiana, and a fellow from McAllen, Texas. People from all around the country are here to gain the skills necessary to be able to work and put food on the table. And again, that's why I'm here. This is a program that works.

I want to thank my friend the Governor, Kenny Guinn, for coming out to say hello. I appreciate him being here. Congressman Jon Porter—he's a good fellow, a really good fellow, and I appreciate him coming out. Congressman Jim Gibbons—he's from northern Nevada.

I know we got members of the Nevada National Guard, First Squadron, 221st Cavalry. I appreciate you being here. Thanks for your service.

I told you one of the things I'm working on is to make the country a better country. See, I know the strength of the country is the hearts and souls of the citizens. Right here in Nevada, you've got a lot of loving citizens who are willing to help neighbors in need.

When I landed today, I met a fellow named Mike Peschl. Where are you, Mike?